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SAVE THE CÔA SITE MOVEMENT, INC.

MOVIMENTO PARA SALVAR O VALE E GRAVURAS DE "FOZ-CÔA"

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OPEN LETTER TO PRESIDENT SUHARTO OF INDONESIA

Mr. President,

The present occupation of East Timor by Indonesia is of serious concern to all freedom-loving people. I, for one, and in name of many others who share this same concern, have decided to appeal to you to take the necessary steps to find a solution which satisfies the needs and rights of both Indonesia and East Timor.

I know that this is not an easy thing to achieve, but the present situation cannot go on indefinitely. The inhabitants of East Timor should not be forced to endure the loss of certain basic human rights, and Indonesia should not have her image tarnished by this occupation. To the world, however, such image can only be restored with the end of this intolerable situation.

Not wanting to be accused of being prejudiced and intransigent or one-sided, I try to imagine myself on the Indonesian side, to be better able to understand Indonesia's position. I am well aware of the repeated claims that in 1975 East Timor was not prepared for independence and had no means of surviving as such. I am also aware of claims that Portugal abandoned Timor, didn't want to know about it, and, surprisingly, is only now interested after so many years. Above all, I am very aware of the world situation which existed in 1975. The cold war climate then prevailing and the communist system trying to expand were considered by many to be a real threat to Indonesia. Any communist or sympathetic regime in East Timor could have become a foothold and a potential source of problems for Indonesia. As such, the occupation of East Timor could have been considered a preventive measure aimed at avoiding the communist threat. If the occupation of East Timor was done as a preventive measure, then it is high time to understand and accept that such threat no longer exists. There is no reason which can justify the continuation of this situation, which has resulted in the incarceration and elimination of individuals for political reasons, the suppression of human rights and religion, as well as the destruction of the political and social order of East Timor. These things have been witnessed by the world community since then, and should stop immediately.

Efforts to find solutions through dialogue and negotiations in difficult situations are the way outstanding leaders reveal their statesmanship. Just as the initiatives of President Nixon in China and Ronald Reagan in the former Soviet Union enhanced their images and prestige as world leaders, I believe similar action by your Excellency would contribute to the good name and prestige of Indonesia in the world community.

Because I believe a resolution of this situation is possible, I ask you, as President, to use your influence, under the auspices of United Nations, to resolve the situation in East Timor. The people of this former Portuguese territory should be allowed to express their choice for the future, be it a complete or partial integration with Indonesia, a federation, or any other

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status, provided that such choice be freely made. This implies, of course, the right too keep their own identity, language, religion, customs and traditions, even if their choice is some form of political integration with Indonesia. If the people of East Timor become a small minority within Indonesia, their rights, even as a minority, should be protected. Being in the minority must not be synonymous with illegality, just as being in the majority does not, by itself, mean legality or rightfulness.

A constructive and positive dialogue can and should be the only way to achieve peace and the well being of both parties. I would be deeply grateful if you, Mr. President, would personally intervene in this situation. Your efforts would undoubtedly be recognized and appreciated by the entire world community.

Yours truly,

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